



12 December 2004



## **SAFETY ALERT** **Another Soldier Killed** **in Car Crash**

1. Yet another USAREUR Soldier has died in a car crash. According to police reports, the right wheels of the Soldier's car went off the edge of the road, and the Soldier lost control of the vehicle while trying to return to the hard road surface. The road was wet and curvy, and the Soldier was likely driving too fast for these conditions. Although the crash is still under investigation, it appears that this tragedy could have been avoided if the Soldier had been driving at a more reasonable speed.
2. The insurance industry estimates that 30 percent of all single-car crashes are caused by drivers who do not know what to do when a wheel of their vehicle drifts off the hard road surface. Their first reaction is to slam on the brakes, pull the steering wheel to the left, or both, which causes the vehicle to roll or swerve to the opposite side of the road and into oncoming traffic.
3. The key to preventing crashes of this type is to first, **SLOW DOWN** and drive at speeds commensurate with conditions. This is the only way to ensure you will arrive alive. If your vehicle does run off the road, remain calm, and do the following:
  - Do not slam on the brakes or turn the steering wheel sharply to the left in an effort to pull back onto the road. Doing so at high speed will likely cause you to lose control and crash.
  - Carefully guide the vehicle along the road. If the shoulder is soft or slopes downward, the wheels may pull the vehicle to the right. Keep a firm grip on the steering wheel with both hands to prevent this from happening.
  - Slowly remove your foot from the accelerator. When you feel that you have full control of your vehicle, slow down a little more and carefully steer back onto the road. If the road is not at the same level as the shoulder, expect a jolt when the front wheel makes contact with the hard road surface. Hold the steering wheel firmly and avoid oversteering. If you fail to get all four wheels back onto the road, slow down and try again. If you are still unable to get back onto the road, stop your vehicle as far from traffic as possible; then take steps to protect yourself and others. Set up your warning triangle and get help.

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4. Good judgment is essential in preventing crashes of this kind. Drivers must observe posted or implied speed limits and reduce their speed according to weather and road conditions. The Soldier who died may have avoided this crash by driving slower.

5. Ensure that this safety alert is given widest possible distribution by forwarding it electronically and posting it on unit bulletin boards. I want every Soldier to read this safety alert and renew their commitment to “No Loss of Life” in FY 05. Sponsors should read this safety alert to their family members. Remember, safety means taking care of yourself as well as taking care of one another. Under the Oak Tree Counseling works—use it! Doing so will help ensure that we continue to execute with excellence, Any Mission, Anywhere.

  
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General, USA  
Commanding

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***ANY MISSION, ANYWHERE!***